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ABSTRACT

Goal One of the National Education Goals states that, by the year 2000, every child in America will start school ready to learn. The second objective under this goal (that parents will be their child's first teacher, devote time daily to helping their child learn, and receive training and support) emphasizes the important role parents play in helping to ensure that their children are prepared for formal learning. This report examines successful state and federal parent education programs, observing that successful approaches are voluntary, intensive, flexible, accessible, respectful of families, culturally sensitive, and comprehensive. Effective programs also provide multiple delivery systems, use staff whose background reflects that of the target population, recruit first-time parents and fathers as well as mothers, and use well-developed curricula. Successful programs profiled include: (1) Arkansas' Home Instruction for Preschool Youngsters; (2) Connecticut's Parent Education and Support Centers; (3) Hawaii's Healthy Start Program; (4) Kentucky's Parent and Child Education; (5) Maryland's Family Support Centers; (6) Minnesota's Early Childhood Family Education; (7) Missouri's Parents as Teachers; (8) South Carolina's Target 2000 Parent Education Program; and (9) Washington's Project Even Start. The parent education component of several federal programs, such as the Comprehensive Child Development Program, Even Start, and Family Resource and Support Program are discussed. The report concludes by noting that, overall, parent education programs should be part of a continuum of community-based, family-centered, prevention-oriented services for children and their families. (MDM)

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ACHIEVING NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS

The Role of Parent Education in Achieving School Readiness

NATIONAL GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION

State Policy Reports

Social Services Program

Employment and Social Services Policy Studies

by Elizabeth A. Stief

Social Services Program
Employment and Social Services Policy Studies
National Governors' Association

Since their initial meeting in 1908 to discuss interstate water problems, the Governors have worked through the National Governors' Association to deal collectively with issues of public policy and governance. The association's ongoing mission is to support the work of the Governors by providing a bipartisan forum to help shape and implement national policy and to solve state problems.

The members of the National Governors' Association are the Governors of the fifty states, the territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the Virgin Islands, and the commonwealths of the Northern Mariana Islands and Puerto Rico. The association has a nine-member Executive Committee, a Task Force on State Management, and three standing committees—on Economic Development and Commerce, Human Resources, and Natural Resources. Through NGA's committees, the Governors examine and develop policy and address key state and national issues. Special task forces often are created to focus gubernatorial attention on federal legislation or on state-level issues.

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Executive Summary

The second objective under Goal One of the National Education Goals emphasizes the important role parents play in helping to ensure that their children are prepared for formal learning. To aid parents in meeting this responsibility, many states are implementing and expanding parent education programs. While known by a variety of names, such as parenting education, family support, and family literacy, each of these programs seeks to enhance parents' child-rearing abilities through instruction in child development and healthy parent-child interaction.

Research and experience suggest that successful parent education programs share many characteristics. They are voluntary, intensive, flexible, accessible, respectful of families, and responsive to their needs, culturally sensitive, and comprehensive. Effective programs also provide multiple delivery systems for services, use staff whose background reflects that of the target population, recruit first-time parents and fathers as well as mothers, and use well-developed curricula.

Several states have begun to implement parent education programs. Successful programs profiled in this paper include Arkansas' Home Instruction for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) program, Connecticut's Parent Education and Support Centers, Hawaii's Healthy Start Program, Kentucky's Parent and Child Education (PACE), Maryland's Family Support Centers, Minnesota's Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), Missouri's Parents as Teachers (PAT), South Carolina's Target 2000 Parent Education Program, and Washington's Project Even Start. Parent education is also a component of several federal programs including the Comprehensive Child Development Program, Even Start, and the Family Resource and Support Program.

Research shows that parent education produces consistent, positive, long-lasting results for both parents and children. As additional states move toward implementation of these programs, issues to consider include the targeting of specific populations to receive services and the role of fathers in programs. Ideally, parent education programs should be part of a continuum of community-based, family-centered, prevention-oriented services for children and their families.

1. Introduction

In 1990, recognizing that early childhood experiences are critical to success in school and after, President Bush and the Governors established school readiness for all young children as the first of six National Education Goals. A child's readiness for school is influenced by many factors—access to regular health care, nutritional status, economic status, physical living conditions, and access to high quality preschool programs. Yet, of all the elements in a child's environment, effective parents are the most influential factor in nurturing competent children who are ready for school. Research provides compelling evidence that a mother's child-rearing practices and beliefs during the early years of a child's life are related to the child's subsequent performance in school. Factors such as the mother's teaching style, the quality of mother-child verbal interactions, the frequency with which the mother reads to her child, the provision of appropriate play materials, and the affective quality of the mother-child relationship are all associated with children's intellectual functioning and school achievement. The primacy of the family in preparing children for school is addressed by the Goal One objective, which states that "Every parent in America will be a child's first teacher and devote time each day to helping his or her preschool child learn; parents will have access to the training and support they need."

The need for these training and support programs for parents has become increasingly clear. When asked to identify what would most improve the school readiness of children, a majority of kindergarten teachers polled said parent education. All parents need emotional support and practical help raising children. They need information, advice, and feedback about child development and parenting. In recent decades, social, economic, and demographic changes have reduced the level of support families have traditionally enjoyed. With an increasingly mobile society, fewer parents are able to rely on the informal assistance of relatives, friends, neighbors, and community institutions. The ability of families to function effectively, particularly under stress, depends to a large degree on this social support. Today the number of vulnerable families is increasing just as the levels of support for these families are decreasing. About half a million children are born to teenage mothers each year. Twenty-seven percent of all children under six are growing up in single-parent homes and 24 percent of children under six live in poverty. Among two-parent families, economic pressures have made it necessary for both parents to seek full-time employment outside the home. Recognizing the need to support these and all families, states have begun to respond with programs that enhance parents' child-rearing abilities. Parent education programs play a key role in these family support initiatives.

2. Components of Successful Parent Education Programs

Parent education has a variety of meanings depending on the goals and context of specific programs. For the purpose of this paper, parent education is defined as those programs that seek to enhance the child-rearing ability of parents through instruction in child development and healthy parent-child interaction. Most of the research on parent education is dated and highly specific and ignores the role of the father. Where there is good research, it focuses on the effects of a specific intervention. There is relatively little information about specific practices that could be used as guidelines for new program development and implementation. However, this research combined with anecdotal evidence and the experiences of several successful programs yields a fairly complete picture of the components needed for successful parent education programs.

Available data suggests that successful parent education programs are:

- Voluntary. Parents who are voluntarily involved in programs are more receptive to changing their behavior and are more likely to feel in control of their lives.
- Intensive. Studies involving both middle- and low-income populations find more significant and sustained effects when interventions are frequent and occur over a long period of time.
- Flexible. Successful programs gear content and methods to the interests and needs of parents and provide a variety of techniques for parents rather than a "one-way-only" approach.
- Accessible. Successful programs are delivered in a variety of settings, including homes, schools, or community institutions, with transportation or child care provided when necessary.
- Culturally Sensitive. Successful programs value diversity and reflect an appreciation of the cultural and socioeconomic bases of parent behavior and belief while avoiding stereotyping.
- Respectful. Successful programs build on family strengths and seek to empower parents by encouraging them to find solutions to their own problems.
- Responsive. Successful programs work with families to solve problems as they arise.
- Comprehensive. Successful programs coordinate or provide referral to a wide array of needed services.

Staffing is a critical element in successful parent education programs. Important staffing issues to consider include the following.

- Selection. Successful programs use staff and community members who share the culture, language, or background of the target population.
- Staff-parent relationships. In successful programs, staff-parent relationships are collaborative and are built on trust, respect, and mutual understanding. These relationships blend education, practical assistance, and social support.
- Training. Successful programs provide training for staff on a regular basis and the opportunity for teambuilding and frequent, ongoing communication.
- Continuity. Successful programs ensure continuity in the relationship that a parent has with a staff member in order to build trust and understanding. For example, the home visitor will always be the same person.

Methods of service delivery also play an important role in parent education programs. Successful programs use a variety of techniques to deliver services. These include the following.

- Home visits. Home visits allow the parent educator to give more individualized attention to the family, establish trust, and view family interactions in the home environment. They are especially important for reaching at-risk populations.
- Discussion groups. The group format gives parents an opportunity to interact with other parents and to develop a supportive network. Parents are able to learn from each other, gain self-confidence, and develop social skills.
- Instruction in child development. Programs should provide parents with an understanding of realistic expectations for children at various developmental stages.
- Specific parenting training and advice. Programs use role-playing, modeling, and demonstrations rather than didactic instruction.
- Parent-child interaction. Parent-child interaction time provides parents a chance to practice new behaviors and receive feedback from staff and other adults.

Recruitment is another important element of parent education programs. Successful programs:

- use personal contacts to recruit parents, usually door-to-door soliciting, as well as written materials;
- involve schools and other community agencies—health agencies, child protective services, preschool programs, and social service agencies—in recruitment;
- actively recruit first-time parents who tend to be the most responsive to training and the most committed to programs; and

- attempt to recruit fathers as well as mothers—outcomes for children are more positive when both parents participate in parenting education.

Curriculum in parent education programs primarily encourages parents to interact with their children in more positive and supportive ways. There is no evidence that any one curriculum is more effective than any other. It is important, however, that the curriculum used is well-developed and that program goals are clearly communicated to parents.

3. Promising State Initiatives in Parent Education

Parent education is now being offered in numerous states by a variety of agencies with different goals and approaches. Child welfare agencies in Iowa, North Carolina, and Wisconsin are using parent education programs as a way to prevent child abuse and neglect. Iowa offers parent education as a component of their state welfare reform initiative to reduce long-term welfare dependency. State education departments in California, Iowa, Ohio, Tennessee, and Wisconsin encourage parent education under parent involvement initiatives. State early childhood programs in Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Washington also have parent education components. The Texas Association of School Boards has developed its own parenting curriculum—Practical Parent Education, which is currently in use in more than 200 public school districts across the state. In Oregon and West Virginia, parent education is offered to students as part of the school curriculum in the middle and upper grades. In some schools in Oregon, the course is a requirement for graduation.

Other states specifically target teenage parents for parent education programs. Connecticut offers a Young Parents Program; in partnership with the Ounce of Prevention Fund, Illinois offers a Parents Too Soon program; Ohio offers a GRADS (Graduation, Reality, and Dual-Role Skills) program; and Texas offers a Pregnancy Education and Parenting Program.

Parent education programs can be divided into three broad categories: "pure" parent education programs, family literacy programs, and family resource and support programs. The following examples of each type of program demonstrate the variety of approaches to parent education and indicate some of the most ambitious efforts in the field.

"PURE" PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS. Parent education programs focus specifically on providing parents with the information and skills they need to encourage their child's intellectual, social, and emotional development. School readiness is a common goal of these programs. Arkansas, Minnesota, Missouri, and South Carolina have implemented—or are in the process of implementing—statewide parent education programs.

Arkansas—Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY). Arkansas' Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters is a home-based enrichment program for at-risk young children and their parents. Originally developed in Israel by the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), the HIPPY program was first piloted in the United States in 1984 and was introduced in Arkansas in 1986.

HIPPY seeks to break the cycle of under-education, unemployment, and poverty among educationally disadvantaged families by working with parents to enhance their

roles as their children's first teachers. Paraprofessionals from the parents' own communities train parents in developmentally appropriate readiness activities and positive reinforcement techniques. Parents are required to work with their children fifteen minutes a day, five days a week, thirty weeks a year for two years. The second year coincides with the year the child is in kindergarten. In addition to home visits, parents gather twice a month for group enrichment activities that provide peer support and connection to community resources such as health, education, and human services. The goals of HIPPY include:

- school functioning and development of children by promoting comfortable, nonthreatening learning environments;
- parental involvement in their child's education;
- development of parental self-esteem and self-sufficiency;
- family literacy;
- positive parent-child relationships and interactions;
- empowerment of the family to access resources within the community; and
- preparing children with the necessary skills for entry into a public school.

Target Population. HIPPY targets low-income at-risk children aged four and five and their families.

Program Coverage. There are currently thirty-one HIPPY sites located in 54 counties and 130 school districts across Arkansas. Approximately 10 percent of all four- and five-year-old children in Arkansas, which currently totals 5,112 children, are served by the program. A pilot project for three-year-olds serves an additional forty-four children. Next year, HIPPY hopes to make the piloted curriculum for three-year-olds available to all HIPPY sites.

Funding. Funding for HIPPY comes primarily from the ABC (Arkansas Better Chance) Act of 1991. In fiscal 1993, HIPPY was funded at a level of $6.9 million with 49.1 percent coming from the ABC Act, 14.3 percent from federal Chapter One funds, 5.1 percent from the federal Job Training Partnership Act, and 18.0 percent from in-kind site-level matches (money or materials). Additional funding sources include Head Start, Compensatory Education, Even Start, private foundations, and businesses.

Services Provided. The HIPPY program has a two-year curriculum that runs concurrently with the school year. The HIPPY curriculum consists of eighteen storybooks, sixty corresponding activity packets, and sixteen manipulative shapes. Paraprofessionals visit participating parents in their homes biweekly to instruct them in using the HIPPY educational materials. The program focuses on language, discrimination skills, problemsolving, logical thinking, self-concept, and creativity.

Parent group meetings are scheduled every two weeks and include role playing of the weeks' activities, discussion relating to the material or the children, enrichment opportunities, and information on accessing resources within the community.

Evaluation. Several studies in Arkansas examining school performance have found that HIPPY children outscore non-HIPPY children in measures of school

readiness and school achievement and are retained less often in the early grades. There also is evidence that the HIPPY program enhances parents' literacy skills. A HIPPY USA study found parents' reading level rose significantly after program participation—from a pretest grade level of 5.35 to a level of 6.11 nine months later.

HIPPY USA was established in 1988 in New York City by the NCJW to supply training and technical assistance to the growing network of local HIPPY programs in the United States. Currently there are 80 HIPPY programs in 23 states, providing services to more than 11,000 families nationwide. NCJW has recently conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the HIPPY program. Findings are not yet available but will include effects on school readiness, parents' participation in school activities, and children's school performance.

Minnesota—Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE). Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is a program for all Minnesota families with children from birth to kindergarten age. The ECFE program recognizes that families provide children's first and most significant teachers. The mission of ECFE is to strengthen families and support the ability of all parents to provide the best possible environment for the healthy growth and development of their children. ECFE was developed through a series of pilot programs funded by the Minnesota legislature and coordinated by the Minnesota Council on Quality Education from 1974 to 1983. In 1984 the legislature approved a funding formula and the program expanded statewide. The program is designed to:

- support parents in their efforts in raising children;
- offer child development information and alternative parenting techniques;
- help create effective communication between parents and their children;
- supplement the discovery and learning experiences of children; and
- promote positive parental attitudes throughout their child's school years.

Target Population. ECFE is available to all parents and their children from birth to kindergarten enrollment. There is special outreach to at-risk families.

Program Coverage. ECFE is currently available in 380 of Minnesota's 392 school districts and serves 99.6 percent of children under age five in the state. During 1991-1992, more than 230,000 parents and children were served.

Funding. ECFE programs are funded through a combined local levy and state aid formula. Although percentages vary according to the local tax base, collectively 40 percent of program funding is from state aid and 60 percent from local tax levies. Total funding for 1993-1994 is $31,162,000. Programs may supplement funds with registration fees and additional funds from other sources. Fees are waived for families who are unable to pay.

Services Provided. Although programs are tailored to community needs, most include the following components:

- parent discussion groups;
- play and learning activities for children;

- parent-child activities;
- special events for the entire family;
- home visits;
- early screening for children's health and developmental problems;
- information on other community resources for families and young children; and
- libraries of books, toys, and other learning materials.

Each program has an advisory council that includes participating parents and that helps to match services to community needs. Services are provided in a variety of community sites, and programs work closely with education, health, and human service agencies to assist parents and children in obtaining other needed services.

Evaluation. A 1979 survey of kindergarten teachers in forty-nine schools found that a majority of teachers reported that children who had been in the ECFE program had more positive attitudes toward school, better preparation in prekindergarten basic skills, more confidence and social skills, fewer behavior problems, better relationships with their parents, and greater emotional maturity.

A recent parent outcome study conducted by ECFE and based on interviews before and after a year of participation found that after a year in the program parents report:

- increased peer support;
- increased sense of confidence and self-esteem as a parent;
- increased knowledge, awareness, and understanding about children and child development;
- changed perceptions and expectations for themselves as parents and for their children; and
- changed behavior such as giving more time and attention to their children, becoming more sensitive to their children's needs and viewpoints, and acting less impulsively with their children.

Missouri—Parents as Teachers (PAT). Missouri's Parents as Teachers Program is a home-school partnership designed to give children the best possible start in life and to assist parents in their role as the child's first teacher. PAT began as a pilot project for first-time parents in 1981 with funding from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Danforth Foundation of St. Louis. The success of the pilot project led to the passage of the Early Childhood Development Act of 1984, which authorized funding for the program in every school district in the state. Statewide expansion of the program began in 1985. PAT is a primary prevention program designed to maximize children's overall development. The PAT curriculum is designed to strengthen the foundations of later learning—language and intellectual development and motor and social skills.

Target Population. PAT is available to all parents of children from birth to kindergarten age. It is designed to serve parents of all backgrounds and socioeconomic levels with special efforts made to serve "hard-to-reach" families.

Program Coverage. There are currently 556 programs in Missouri in school districts and child care centers. Every school district in the state offers a PAT program. In 1992-1993, 65,000 families with children under three and 64,000 families with children between the ages of three and five were served.

Funding. Missouri provides PAT sites with a base payment for each family that participates in an approved PAT program. Additional funding may be available locally for "hard-to-reach" families and those with more than one child under age three. Funding for the program was $14 million in 1992-1993. The Education Reform Bill, which passed in spring 1993, provides for an additional $17 million over the next five years; $3 million in additional funds will be available for 1993-1994.

Services Provided. To achieve the goal of maximum child development, PAT offers the following services.

- Personalized home visits by specially trained parent educators who offer information about child development and practical ways parents can encourage children's development. Parent educators also provide tips on home safety, effective discipline, constructive play, and other topics.
- Group meetings where parents can share their experiences, common concerns, frustrations, and successes.
- Periodic monitoring and formal screening to ensure that youngsters do not reach the age of three with an undetected learning problem, handicap, or developmental delay.
- A referral network that helps parents who need special assistance that is beyond the scope of PAT.

Evaluation. A 1985 evaluation of the pilot program found three-year-old graduates were significantly more advanced than a comparison group in language development, intellectual abilities, and social skills. In addition, their parents were more knowledgeable about child-rearing practices and child development than were parents of comparison children. A follow-up study of these children as they completed first grade found that the effects of PAT held; PAT graduates scored higher than the comparison children on reading and math achievement tests and their parents were more likely to be involved in their education. A 1991 evaluation of the program after statewide expansion found that PAT graduates scored significantly above national norms on measures of school-related achievement at age three, despite being over-represented on traditional risk characteristics. Also, their parents were significantly more knowledgeable about child development and child-rearing practices.

The PAT National Center was established in 1987 by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to provide training, technical assistance, program adaptation, and research opportunities in the PAT model. PAT has been replicated in communities in forty-one states and Washington, D.C. It has spread internationally to Australia, England, New Zealand, and the West Indies.

South Carolina—Target 2000 Parent Education Program. The Target 2000 Parent Education Program aims to improve children's school readiness through comprehensive educational and support services for parents, children, and families. The Target 2000 Program began as a pilot project under the state education reform legislation of 1989, "Target 2000: School Reform for the Next Decade." In 1993, the Early Childhood Development and Academic Assistance Act provided funding to expand the program statewide. The goal of Target 2000 is to support parents in their role as the principal teachers of their preschool children. Education in parenting and family literacy are the core components of the program.

Target Population. South Carolina's parent education program serves all parents with children from birth through age five who choose to participate. Intensive and special efforts are made to recruit parents whose children are at risk of school failure.

Program Coverage. This year there are fifteen sites statewide serving 50 to 150 families each, on average. In addition to providing parent education, these fifteen sites are serving as technical assistance sites for other school districts as the program expands statewide. All remaining districts (or consortia of districts) serving 2,000 or more students must submit program plans by spring 1994 for the statewide expansion of the program targeted for September 1994.

Funding. Programs are funded through the Education Improvement Act of 1984 that established an extra penny tax for education. The current funding level for the fifteen parent education technical assistance sites is $1,432,066. Funding for remaining districts or consortia of districts for planning and implementation of the program statewide is $5,136,258, or about $40,000 per site.

Services Provided. To support parents in their roles as principal teachers of their children, Target 2000 Programs are required by law to:

- provide parent education in parenting skills;
- provide or coordinate developmental screening for children; and
- offer opportunities for parents to get a high school diploma or equivalent certificate if they do not have one.

Although individual sites may develop their own parent education and family literacy programs, most programs include home visitation, group parent sessions, and parent-child interaction activities. Many sites use models developed in other states such as Hawaii's Early Learning Program (HELP), Kentucky's Parent and Child Education (PACE), Minnesota's Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), and Missouri's Parents as Teachers (PAT). Other services offered at some sites include child care, transportation assistance, health care, counseling, direct educational services to children, and referral services.

Evaluation. An independent evaluation of the original twenty-one Target 2000 Parent Education Pilot Programs conducted during the spring and early summer of 1993 found the programs had far reaching effects on the participating families. Parent surveys indicated that 95 percent of parents believed the program had a positive influence on them, their children, and their families. When asked to identify the major impact, parents noted increased participation with their children in learning activities related to

school readiness. Program staff also noted increased parent involvement in home learning activities as well as improvements in parent competence, parent-child relations, and in children's language, social competence, and general school readiness skills.

FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS. Because one of the best predictors of a child's success in school is the education level of the parent, family literacy programs emphasize adult education for parents along with preschool education for children. Reflecting a belief in the importance of parental involvement in education, these programs also show parents how to interact with and teach their children. Kentucky and Washington both have quality family literacy programs.

Kentucky—Parent and Child Education (PACE). The PACE program is designed to increase the educational expectations and aspirations of parents for their preschool children while raising parents' own educational levels and improving the learning skills of their young children. PACE was developed in 1986 as a pilot project to break the cycle of undereducation so prevalent in Kentucky. The program provides preschool education for children of high school dropouts and adult education and parenting skills classes for their parents. A parent-child education component of the program focuses specifically on teaching the parent to teach the child. PACE program goals include:

- raising the educational level of parents of preschool children through instruction in basic skills;
- enhancing parenting skills;
- increasing developmental skills of preschool children to prepare them for academic success;
- providing a role model for the child though parental interest in education;
- enabling parents to become familiar with and comfortable in the school setting;
- enhancing the relationship of the parent and child through planned, structured interaction; and
- demonstrating to parents their power to affect their child's ability to learn.

In 1988 PACE was awarded the Innovations in State and Local Government Award for its forward-thinking public/private/community partnership in the provision of preventive social services to high-risk families. The Awards Program is sponsored by the Ford Foundation and the JFK School of Government at Harvard.

Target Population. Any school district may apply for PACE funds but preference is given to those districts with the highest percentages or concentrations of adults without a high school diploma. The program is open to parents of preschool children between the ages of three and five who lack a high school diploma or who test below an eleventh grade level.

Program Coverage. In 1993 there were thirty-six PACE sites. As of March 1993, 531 adults, 517 children, and 512 families were being served by the program.

Funding. PACE is funded through the Workforce Development Cabinet of Kentucky's Department for Adult Education. The funding level in 1991 was $1.8 million.

Services Provided. PACE follows the school-year schedule with programs running at least three full days per week for a minimum of fourteen hours instruction time per week. Class enrollment is limited to fifteen families. The PACE daily program includes preschool education for children, joint parent-child education, and adult education in reading, math, social studies, communications, vocational skills, life skills, and parenting skills.

Evaluation. A 1989 evaluation of the PACE program found adult skills improved an average of 1.1 grade levels in reading, 1.7 grade levels in math, and 1.1 grade levels in language. Seventy-two percent of former PACE parents who took the GED passed. Participants also reported a better understanding of their children's abilities and needs. A 1987 study of children enrolled in PACE found that these children demonstrated an average 28 percent increase in developmental abilities as measured by the High/Scope Child Observation Record. Other data compiled by the Department of Education found that among former PACE children, 71 percent had perfect school attendance.

Parent and Child Education (PACE) Daily Program

Parent	*Child*
Breakfast	Breakfast
Adult Education (2 hours)	Preschool Education (2 hours)
▪ Reading	▪ Language development
▪ Math	▪ Math
▪ Social Studies	▪ Social interaction
▪ Communications, oral and written	▪ Communications, oral
▪ Vocational skills	Movement
Parent-child education (1 hour)	Parent-child education (1 hour)
Lunch	Lunch
Family Life Skills (1 hour)	Nap
▪ Parental skills	
▪ Life skills	

Using PACE as a model, the William Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust established the Kenan Trust Family Literacy Project. In 1989, a grant from the Kenan Trust founded the National Center for Family Literacy to provide training and technical assistance for program development, to fund selected program models, and to disseminate information on family literacy. PACE has been emulated in Connecticut as a part of the "Schools for the Twenty-first Century" program, in North Carolina funded by the Kenan Trust, and in Hawaii as part of the family literacy initiatives in Hawaii's Family Support Act of 1990.

In 1990 Kentucky's Education Reform Act (KERA) mandated that all schools in which 20 percent or more of the student population is eligible for free lunch must offer Family Resource Centers in elementary schools and Youth Service Centers in middle and high schools. Family Resource Centers are required to provide access to PACE programs as well as "Families in Training," a parent education program for new and expectant parents integrating home visits, group meetings, and child development monitoring. Centers must either provide the programs themselves or link parents to existing programs within the community. Health services, or referral to health services, and preschool and after-school child care services also are offered. There are currently 226 Family Resource Centers, 88 Youth Service Centers, and 59 combined Family Resource and Youth Service Centers.

Washington—Project Even Start. Project Even Start is designed to promote the literacy of both parents and their children by teaching the parent to teach the child. The program has been funded since 1987 by the state legislature and began prior to the federal Even Start program. Project Even Start is administered by the Office of Adult Literacy, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. The goals of the program are to:

- help parents recognize that they can be the most effective teachers of their children;
- provide illiterate and semiliterate parents with educational and parenting skills to increase self-esteem and confidence in their ability to assist their children in the learning process; and
- enhance children's learning experiences in formal educational settings by providing them with a positive home environment, which contributes to their motivation to learn.

Target Population. In order to qualify for the Even Start program, parents must have less than ninth-grade-level skills in reading or math and their children must be enrolled in a program for children at risk, such as Head Start, Chapter One, bilingual education, or ECEAP, Washington's state-funded Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program.

Program Coverage. Project Even Start served 567 parents and about 1,300 children during 1992-1993. Programs are located in eighteen community colleges and community-based organizations across the state.

Funding. The state legislature appropriated $735,000 for Project Even Start in fiscal 1993.

Services Provided. Even Start programs provide instruction that integrates parenting skills with literacy and basic education skills. Classes meet three to four days a week for a minimum of ten hours a week. The Project Even Start model includes the following components:

- adult basic skills for parents including literacy, reading, writing, math, GED preparation, and English as a second language;
- parenting classes to provide an opportunity to discuss problems and questions parents may have;

- preschool classes for children while their parents are involved in parenting and basic skills training; and
- Parent Child Activity Together (PACT) Time to provide a supervised time for parents to practice with their children the skills they have learned in the classroom.

Project Even Start coordinates its activities with early childhood education programs, and provides parents with referrals to other needed services such as child care, transportation, or counseling.

Evaluation. The following observations were made based on 1992-1993 school year data.

- There is little attrition among participants. Almost two-thirds of those who began classes in the fall stayed throughout the year.
- Parents' reading and math skills improved.
- Ninety-eight percent of participants attended a parent-teacher conference, most for the first time.
- More than two-thirds participated in their child's classroom activities for the first time.
- Three-fourths of those with children in elementary school reported that their child's grades had improved.
- Participants reported that they read more often to their children, feel more confident in their role as parents, feel they have a role in their child's learning, and have greater self-esteem and feel more in control of their lives.

Washington also has nine federal Even Start programs with grants totaling more than $1 million. The federal programs are administered through the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and are expected to serve 745 families during fiscal 1993. The state and federal programs have a single advisory board, share some training, and cooperate on technical assistance. At five sites, state and federal programs have combined efforts, thus greatly expanding services.

FAMILY RESOURCE AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS. Family resource and support programs take a more systemic, ecological approach to strengthening families by offering a range of needed services in addition to parent education. They are based on the premise that a strong, stable, well-functioning family is essential for a child's optimal growth and development. Connecticut, Hawaii, and Maryland all have well-developed networks of family resource centers.

Connecticut—Parent Education and Support Centers. In 1985 the Connecticut Department of Children and Youth Services (DCYS) began planning an initiative for children and families that would include funding for comprehensive parent centers. By the end of 1986 the Connecticut legislature had approved funding for a statewide network of ten Parent Education and Support Centers. These ten programs, two per DCYS service region, began offering services in January 1987. The goal of the Parent Education and Support Centers is to improve parenting and enhance family functioning in order to provide children and youth with increased opportunities for positive

development. The centers are based on the principles articulated by Bernice Weissbourd of the Family Resource Coalition, that family and parent support services should be preventive in nature, family-focused, and community-based, and should recognize the value of networking and peer support. In addition, center services must be accessible; programs are encouraged to collaborate with other agencies to provide services; and parents should be involved in planning, governing, and operating center activities. As of 1990, all centers are required to convene an advisory group, composed of a majority of parents eligible for center services and representative of the community being served, to advise the planning and implementation of the centers.

Target Population. Parent Education and Support Centers are designed to serve all parents with children under age seventeen with priority given to those parents who are teens, single, low-income, minority, or otherwise at risk.

Program Coverage. There are currently fifteen Parent Education and Support Centers funded across the state. About 30,000 parent contacts are made over the course of a year.

Funding. Funding for each Parent Education and Support Center ranges from $42,697 to $88,716.

Services Provided. Services provided by the centers are grouped into four categories, which each center is required to address. These categories include the following.

- Parent Education and Training Services. Parent education and training services include multisession training programs designed to teach and encourage good family management and communication practices. Many programs teach parents how to set behaviorial limits, establish rules, and be consistent. Programs also may teach parents to depersonalize their children's misbehavior, to deal with the stress it causes, to understand the goals of this misbehavior, and to redirect their children into more acceptable behavior.
- Parent Support Services. Parent support services help parents to reduce the isolation and stress of parenthood while building confidence in their parenting abilities. Among support services offered by centers are parent support groups, drop-in programs, warmlines (i.e., telephone support networks), individual consultations, home visits, parent-child activities, and recreational activities for the family.
- Information and Coordination. Centers must be able to provide parents with referrals to other community services including health care, education, and employment services. Centers also provide informational programs and services, such as seminars and lectures, newsletters, and resource booklets.
- Technical Assistance, Consultation, and Training Services. Centers are required to serve as resources for service providers and businesses in the community. The goal of these services is to impact organizational policies, practices, and procedures so that they are more supportive of parents and families. Examples include in-service training for teachers on how to foster parent-school communication, consultation with employers on how to

develop more supportive work policies for families, and technical assistance to day care providers or health professionals.

Evaluation. An evaluation of the Parent Education and Support Centers by the University of Southern Maine found that after being involved in the center, parents:

- expressed an increase in confidence with regard to their parenting skills;
- reported assigning appropriate consequences to negative behavior;
- reported a reduction in family conflicts; and
- reported an increase in parent-child negotiations regarding rules and limits.

In addition to the Parent Education and Support Centers, the Connecticut Department of Children and Families funded six Family Support Programs in October 1992 to provide the next step in a continuum of care for needy children and families. The Family Support Programs serve at-risk and referred families and offer one-on-one play sessions and feedback, group socialization sessions, parent mentors, home visits, assessments, family service plans, and parent support and education.

The Connecticut Department of Education also has established eight Family Resource Centers in school districts across the state. These centers are open to every family in the school district and offer the following services at no cost or on a sliding-fee scale:

- full-time preschool child care;
- school-age child care, which becomes full-time during the summer and when school is not in session;
- Families in Training;
- Parent and Child Education (PACE);
- support and training for family day care providers;
- positive youth development services; and
- resource and referral services.

Hawaii—Healthy Start Program. Healthy Start is a home-based intervention program designed to enhance parent functioning, encourage optimal child development, and prevent child abuse and neglect. Healthy Start began in 1985 as a three-year demonstration project in one site on the island of Oahu. In 1988 Healthy Start received approval as a state program and began expansion statewide. Healthy Start is administered by the Maternal and Child Health Branch of the state's Department of Health. Services are provided by seven nonprofit organizations, under contract to the Department of Health. Its program goals are to:

- enhance child development;
- promote positive parenting;
- enhance parent-child interaction;
- ensure that all families have a primary care physician;

- ensure appropriate use of community resources; and
- prevent child abuse and neglect.

Target Population. Healthy Start accepts pregnant women and mothers with children up to the age of three months. Participants are identified by screening hospital birth records and interviewing new mothers to determine whether families may be at risk for child abuse. Physicians and public health agencies also may refer participants prenatally.

Program Coverage. There are thirteen program sites statewide. Currently, Healthy Start screens about 55 percent of the state's newborn population. This is expected to rise to 90 percent by 1995. Approximately 2,000 families were served in fiscal 1991.

Funding. The 1992 appropriation for Healthy Start was $6.3 million. Three percent of this budget is allocated to the Maternal and Child Health Branch for administration, monitoring, and evaluation. State funds may be supplemented by county funds and fund-raising projects.

Services Provided. Healthy Start programs include the following components.

- Postpartum Screening Assessment. Hospital charts are screened daily in hospitals serving the target areas and are followed up with interview assessments to determine if families are at risk.
- Paraprofessional Home Visitation. Paraprofessionals provide voluntary home visiting services for high-risk families. These visits focus on parent-child bonding and interaction and take place weekly to quarterly depending on the family's assessed level of risk. Home visiting services include assessment of parent-child interaction, parent skill building, child developmental screening, and a free toy lending library for age-appropriate toys.
- Case Management Services and Interagency Coordination. Case management services are provided to meet the multiple needs of enrolled families. Interagency coordination avoids duplication and fragmentation of services while promoting effective service utilization.
- Parent Support Groups and Community Education. Parent support groups are used to increase parents' self-esteem and reduce social isolation. Community education programs enhance awareness of child abuse dynamics and intervention strategies.

Healthy Start services are voluntary and continue until children are five years old. Additional services offered at some sites include respite care (to give parents relief from child care), male home visitors to work with fathers, and parent-child play mornings.

Evaluation. The Maternal and Child Health Branch reports that the incidence of abuse or neglect among program participants is less than 1 percent compared with the approximately 18 to 20 percent estimated among high-risk populations. Among the 2,193 high-risk families served from July 1987 to July 1991, there were only eighteen documented cases of abuse. Among the seventy-four families active with Child Protec-

tive Services because of reported maltreatment at the time of enrollment, none had a subsequent documented incidence of abuse. Assessments of parent-child interaction using the Nursing Child Assessment Satellite Training (NCAST) instruments show significant improvement among participants over time in several areas of parent-child interaction and home environment.

Maryland—Family Support Centers. In 1985 the Maryland State Department of Human Resources, the Morris Goldseker Foundation, and the Aaron and Lillie Strauss Foundation formed a public/private partnership and allocated $400,000 to fund four community-based, drop-in centers for adolescent parents and their children. Friends of the Family was established as an intermediary organization to provide administrative services, raise additional funds, and provide technical assistance and training to community programs. Prevention and early intervention services for young parents and their children from birth to age three is the major focus of Family Support Centers, but each center designs programs to address the needs and interests of their community. Centers are located in neighborhoods with high concentrations of adolescent pregnancy, poverty, low birthweight babies, high school dropouts, child abuse and neglect, unemployment, and children who are not adequately prepared for school. They are designed to provide comprehensive, preventive services on a voluntary basis to help families raise healthy children and build productive futures. On September 26, 1991, Friends of the Family was awarded the Innovations in State and Local Government Award by the Ford Foundation and the JFK School of Government.

Target Population. Family Support Centers are open to all parents of children from birth to age three with priority given to teenage parents and their children.

Program Coverage. Currently there are fifteen sites located in schools, churches, social service organizations, a housing authority, and a community development corporation. Nineteen sites are funded for fiscal 1994. Each center must serve at least forty parents and forty children from birth to age three, four times a month. Approximately 5,000 parents and young children were served in fiscal 1993.

Funding. The total budget for Friends of the Family is $5.3 million for fiscal 1994. Of that, $3.4 million goes to Family Support Centers and $1 million supports Family Start, a federal Comprehensive Child Development Program providing home-based services to 120 families in Baltimore. The remaining funds are used by Friends of the Family for technical assistance, training, monitoring, and evaluation. In 1991 Friends of the Family raised $2.55 in foundation, private sector, federal, and community support for every $2.00 in state investment.

Services Provided. Core services include:

- parenting education;
- child care services for infants and toddlers up to three years of age while their parents are on site;
- health education and referral for a full range of health care services;
- educational and employability services provided on-site and through referral;
- recreation for parents and children;

- service coordination with other agencies;
- developmental assessments for children and remediation of developmental problems either on site or by referral;
- advocacy and community-building;
- short-term counseling on site and referral for more intensive counseling services;
- adolescent pregnancy prevention services to delay both first and subsequent pregnancies; and
- in-home services for "hard-to-reach" families.

Some centers have been able to secure additional funding from public and private sources for additional services such as tutoring, summer camps, support groups, and child abuse prevention services.

Evaluation. Friends of the Family data indicates that in 1992:

- 83 percent of teen parents who were not high school graduates enrolled in school or education courses leading to a GED;
- 93 percent of children from birth to age five visiting Family Support Centers had up-to-date immunizations, compared with 56 percent statewide;
- no child in any family participating at a Family Support Center was removed from his or her home, and forty-eight children were returned from foster care to their families; and
- of the estimated 361 parenting teens under age nineteen who came to Family Support Centers, only 24 had repeat pregnancies.

4. Federal Initiatives in Parent Education

Comprehensive Child Development Program

The federal government also funds parent education programs. Parent education is a core service in the Comprehensive Child Development Program, a national family support demonstration established by Congress in 1988 and administered by the Administration for Children, Youth and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The program was established to provide intensive, comprehensive, integrated, and continuous support services to children from low-income families from birth to entrance into elementary school and to provide needed support services to parents and other household family members to enhance their economic and social self-sufficiency. There are currently twenty-four programs nationwide in Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia.

Even Start

Family literacy is the goal of the federal Even Start program (Part B of the Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988) administered by the Department of Education. Even Start is designed to improve educational opportunities of children and adults by integrating early childhood education and adult education for parents into a unified program. Even Start programs have three interrelated goals:

- to help parents become full partners in the education of their children;
- to assist children in reaching their full potential as learners; and
- to provide literacy training for parents.

To be eligible for a program, a parent must need basic adult education, reside in a school attendance area that receives Chapter One funds, and have a child under age eight. Even Start programs are usually run by local school districts and at least some part of the program is required to be home-based. The National Literacy Act of 1991 amended Even Start to change its name to the Even Start Family Literacy Program. The new law also established community-based organizations and other nonprofit organizations as eligible entities for grants. Even Start funding reached $70 million in 1991, triggering a provision in the original law that when funding passed the $50 million mark, the program would be turned over to the states. As of 1992, the administration of the Even Start program was shifted to the states. To date, 240 school districts across the nation have received Even Start grants.

Family Resource and Support Program

Parent Education is also a required component of the federal Family Resource and Support (FRS) programs. The Human Services Reauthorization Act of 1990 authorized funding for a National Resource Center for Family Support Programs and Family Resource and Support Program Grants to assist states in establishing networks of local family resource and support programs in collaboration with existing agencies. The National Resource Center for Family Support Programs was established in 1991 with a grant awarded to the Family Resource Coalition in Chicago, Illinois. This year, Congress appropriated $4,910,000 for state grants. Applications are currently being reviewed. FRS programs are required to provide educational and support services to assist parents in acquiring parenting skills, learning about child development, and responding appropriately to the behavior of their children. In addition, programs must offer developmental screening, outreach services, community referral, and follow-up services.

Other Federal Programs

Parent education services also may be offered through other federal programs including Head Start, Chapter One, the Family Support Act, the Education of the Handicapped Act, the Bilingual Education Act, and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act.

5. Future Directions

Research shows that education for parenting produces consistent, positive, long-lasting results for both parents and children. Benefits of good parent education programs include increases in children's language, social, cognitive, and analytic skills and development; increased parent-child interaction; improvements in parental knowledge of child development; and positive changes in parents' child-related attitudes and behaviors. Parent education also may strengthen the family unit and parents' personal self-competence and skills. Preschool parent- and family-oriented programs such as parent education are also cost-effective. Children in these programs stay in school longer, attend school more consistently, and are more successful in attaining higher education and meaningful jobs as adults. Other long-term benefits of good programs include reductions in crime, unemployment, time on welfare, and related antisocial behaviors.

Although some states have implemented statewide universal parent education programs, with tight state budgets and limited new resources the issue of targeting arises. Universal programs enjoy broader public support and reduce the stigma that may be associated with receiving a targeted service, but universal programs also are more expensive and may not be able to meet the needs of those who need the services most. Many programs highlighted in this paper have addressed this problem by identifying catchment areas such as school districts with high percentages of at-risk families and opening eligibility to all families within that area. Other programs with universal eligibility have retained an ability to provide intensive support to those who need it, with special outreach and additional services, funds, or service providers for these families.

Another important issue to consider is the role of fathers in education for parenting. Fathers have often been neglected in both research and practice. Yet available evidence suggests that the participation of fathers in parent education has positive results for fathers, mothers, and children. Outcomes for children are more positive when both parents participate in a parent education program than when the mother alone participates. Research also shows that fathers themselves learn and benefit from the parenting curriculum, and mothers are more likely to participate and remain in a program if fathers are involved.

Ideally, parent education programs should be coordinated with other existing programs to provide a continuum of community-based, family-centered, prevention-oriented services to children and their families. Child development and school readiness cannot be achieved without support for and engagement of the family as a whole.

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